

20 July 1954

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

SUBJECT: Conversation with TIME-LIFE Editorial Staff.

1. This memorandum will serve to record certain of the highlights of the luncheon meeting which I attended in New York on Thursday, 15 July 1954, at the invitation of Messrs James Shepley, Chief of the TIME-LIFE Washington Bureau and Mr. Charles J. V. Murphy of FORTUNE Magazine. Certain other important aspects of this conversation have been dealt with in other memoranda because of their special sensitivity or peculiar significance. This meeting had previously been discussed with and approved by the Director, and Mr. Kirkpatrick had been kind enough to furnish certain ideas and suggestions with regard to the subject-matter to be discussed.

2. The following is a list and brief description of the various representatives of the two publications who were present.

- a. Mr. James Shepley: Chief of the Washington Bureau of TIME and LIFE.
- b. Mr. Roy Alexander: Managing Editor of TIME
- c. Mr. Edward K. Thompson: Managing Editor of LIFE.
- d. Mr. C. D. Jackson: Presently holding a transitional position in the top management of LIFE-TIME-FORTUNE and acting as special assistant and advisor to Mr. Henry Luce.
- e. Mr. Edward G. Cerf: Acting Assistant Managing Editor of TIME.
- f. Mr. James Keogh: Associate Editor -- National Affairs -- TIME.
- g. Mr. Robert (?) Baker: Associate Editor and Foreign News Editor of TIME.
- h. Mr. Joseph Purtell: Senior Editor -- Business and Finance -- TIME.
- i. Mr. Louis Banks: (The newest) Senior Editor of TIME.

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3. The luncheon took place in a private dining room and I received a cordial and friendly introduction and welcome. It was suggested that I make a few general statements, to be followed by questions on various points of particular interest to the others. I was given an opportunity to discuss for about 10 or 15 minutes, without serious interruption, a number of our favorite subjects, including "The problems of an intelligence organization in dealing with the free and competitive press." In the course of this discussion I made reference to the amount of damage which is done an Agency such as CIA by irresponsible and speculative writing. I also discussed our difficulties with certain editors and writers who seem determined to either get rid of or force a full and complete exposure of all CIA activities, making reference to the recent article by Jack Kilpatrick which I characterized as a potpourri of all of the wildest and most exaggerated statements which have been made about the Agency and its activities during the past several years. I made reference to the great advantages which the Soviet Intelligence Service has over us as regards secret operations, in that they do not have to concern themselves with their own press. I explained in some detail the kind of thing that we can talk about from time to time with representatives of the responsible press, and the sort of thing that we, as a secret organization, cannot discuss. And I brought out the fact that there are from time to time areas of distinct mutual interest as between this Agency and the responsible press. I drove home by reiteration the fact that we are constantly concerned with the national interest in the broadest sense and are opposed to any sort of writing which, in our judgment, cuts against this, pointing out that this still leaves plenty of room for a cooperative effort always provided we can be sure that our confidences will be respected and protected, and that information which we furnish will not be attributed to either the Agency or the individuals providing the poop. This portion of my discussion was concluded on the note -- which I said I was most anxious to leave with the others -- that if they contemplated publishing anything which expressly touches upon our activities or which they have reason to believe concerns this Agency, we be given an opportunity to comment before publication. I said that we would not always be able to comment, but that from time to time we might be able to straighten them out on the facts and/or prevail upon them not to make reference to CIA as an organization. It would be up to them in the exercise of our best judgment and individual consciences to determine what should be written and how it should be written after this base-touching process. I explained that it was a relatively simple matter for this procedure to be followed by virtue of our excellent connections with the Washington Bureau of TIME-LIFE, as well as with Mr. Charles Murphy of FORTUNE.

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4. There were not many questions and very little disagreement with regard to any of the foregoing points. The only apparently dissenting voice was that of Mr. Partell who I subsequently discovered was the least knowledgeable of any of the group concerning foreign affairs. He simply raised the question as to whether we do not invite curiosity and comment through our own efforts to be secret. He was roundly and soundly answered by Mr. Alexander and others, so that I scarcely had to deal with the question. The line taken by the others was generally to the effect that a secret organization ceases to be such and ceases to have its effectiveness against the enemy unless security is maintained.

25X1A6a 5. In anticipation of the fact that I would be questioned about the [redacted] situation, I opened this subject myself with comments upon the very satisfactory intelligence effort which we had mastered, and in this connection I expressed appreciation for certain passages which I had seen in TIME and LIFE which had commented favorably upon our good intelligence and correct intelligence analysis regarding [redacted]. I then proceeded to use the [redacted] developments as a case-study of how things can go sour in the press, going into some detail in listing the various reasons why the daily press of the United States and other parts of the world had been "Upside down" for a number of days during the most critical period.

25X1A6a I pointed out that the headlines which appeared in practically all of the US press from on or about the 12th of June until about the 25th had been both contrary to the facts and extremely sensational in character, and I cited the amount of damage this had done the US position abroad and in the United Nations. Mr. C. D. Jackson voiced some sharp criticisms of the Agency for not doing more to get the facts out to the press at an earlier date and flatly stated that we should have assumed this responsibility because of "the known weakness and ineptitude of the State Department and USIA" as well as our foreknowledge that not only the Communists but the bleeding hearts all over the world would be sure to get this one wrong and play it haphazardly. Happily Mr. Jackson was answered and effectually silenced by Messrs Alexander, Shepley and others, who pointed out that CIA could not do everybody's work for them, and moreover that no governmental organization could have coped with the flow of erroneous and sensational dispatches from Guatemala City. Not only were these dispatches recognized as having been full of error and the kind of stuff that could get by [redacted] censorship -- the Home Editors had been guilty of gross negligence in failing to read between the lines and take note of the conspicuous warning signals inserted by the reporters. Mr. Alexander commented that had CIA undertaken to handle the matter with the press, it would have only served to invite even more attention to the role of CIA and to increase speculative statements as to our partisanship and alleged involvement in the affair.

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6. Almost all of the others present at the meeting asked questions about the desirability of a congressional committee to act as the CIA watchdog. They implied by their questions at the outset of this portion of the discussion that they were sympathetic to the Mansfield proposal or something like it and wondered why there should be any objection on the part of CIA. After making it plain that this subject was beyond my own area of responsibility and was much more properly the province of the Director and others, I did bring out a few points as matters of personal opinion and not as representative of any position on the part of the Agency as such. These points were as follows:

- a. I said that there was much more congressional knowledge of CIA activities and operations than the public or the press were aware of. I said that the two Appropriations Committees and the two Armed Services Committees, and to a lesser extent the two Foreign Affairs Committees were given very extensive briefings and accountings. The very fact that these committees, and more especially the most interested and responsible members thereof, had kept the faith and observed security had contributed to the public misapprehension on this particular score.
- b. I also worked in some reference to the amount of policy guidance and general supervision which the activities of this Agency receives from the policy levels of Government.
- c. I said that the Agency had not taken any official position in opposition to the idea of a proper congressional committee, but I pointed out that the composition and especially the shifts, based on congressional seniority, which could easily take place in any committees within the Congress were, in my opinion, a legitimate cause for concern on our part.
- d. I said that we had no reason to believe that Senator Mansfield was other than friendly toward the Agency, but that I felt that his bill was based upon some lack of understanding of all of the factors and I said that in my own opinion the Frelinghuysen Bill was an improvement over the Mansfield Bill.

At the conclusion of these remarks there appeared to be a somewhat better understanding on the part of the others present, particularly as regards the pitfalls in the creation of a committee set up to deal with CIA only and as separate and apart from the entire national intelligence effort. Messrs Shepley and Thompson as well as Mr. Alexander were quite helpful down the stretch on this topic.

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7. In conclusion, I should say that the conversation had been well worth while. It is certain that the audience was keenly interested. This was evidenced by the kind and quantity of their questions; by the fact that they kept me until three o'clock -- at least a half-hour longer than most such luncheons run; and finally by the comments of Messrs Shepley, Alexander and C. B. Jackson following the conclusion of the luncheon.

FRANK G. WISNER
Deputy Director (Plans)

Original to DCI
for information.

cc: DDCI

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A/DCI - Col. Grogan ✓

C/PP